



A PARENT'S GUIDE TO TRACK AND FIELD

Congratulations!

Your son/daughter has just joined the Track and Field team.

Track and Field? This spring sport offers a unique experience in the world of running, throwing, and jumping.

This booklet has been prepared specifically for you, the Parent of a son or daughter who is participating on a high school, middle school, or junior high school interscholastic Track and Field team.

It is the hope of the coaches that you the parent will help to accentuate the total Track and Field program and experience at the school by working with the coach(es). In doing so the athlete will be better able to reach his/her full potential and also enjoy the Track and Field experience to its fullest.



YOUR PART BEFORE THE START

As your child is entering his/her first weeks of training there are a number of areas that may be of concern to you as a parent. How can you assist them? What should you expect?

How should a student athlete prepare and deal with training and competition in terms of eating habits, sleep, and mental attitude?

As a rule, don't change any aspect of the normal daily routine. Everything should remain the same in terms of home responsibilities, appropriate eating, sleeping, and social habits.

Parents should be aware that common result of initial training may be muscle soreness. Any athlete in intensive training could be subject to injury. All concerns should be directed to the coach and/or trainer and/or physician.

A well-balanced diet is an asset for any individual and especially an athlete. Any nutritional changes should occur gradually. On meet days high fat and fried food, eggs, and carbonated and acidic beverages should be avoided. Take advantage of easily digestible foods in low quantities. Water intake should not be limited. Generally, the last intake of food should be 2-3 hours prior to the start of the race. Go into a competition on the hungry side. (The opposite can be detrimental.)

HOW TO GREET YOUR FIRST MEET

Pre-Race

Be aware that numerous events will be run during the course of the meet. A Track meet may last anywhere from two hours to a full day. Some may even be organized by the number of schools entered, the age of the runners, or divisions. Find out what time your child is running and in which particular race. The athlete will receive a pre-race sheet before each meet which should be shared with you and I will include meet start time, event the student is in, meet schedule, and home arrival time for the bus.

DO NOT expect the attention of your child once they have once their team at the meet site. They need time to mentally and physically prepare for the event with the coach and the rest of the team.

Post Race or Events

After an athlete finishes their event, it is his/her responsibility to report directly to the coach to turn in performance, places, and to be given comments.

Be aware that athletes have other certain responsibilities after they finish an event. Many coaches require athletes to warm down as a team after the meet as well as actively support teammates who are still participating.

It is important to note: after an event, an athlete will possibly be more physically spent than you would anticipate. Symptoms may include rubbery knees, general weakness, the appearance of fainting, glassy eyes, nausea, and salivating. These symptoms usually pass quickly. Coaches, trained in first aid, are aware of these physical reactions and have the responsibility and ability to treat them.

TRACK TERMS TO KNOW

DUAL MEET	A meet between two teams. Triangular, quad, ect.
FALSE START	One false star and the athlete is DQ.
FAST GUN	A starter whose commands are quickly given before the firing of the gun.
INVITATIONAL	A meet between a multiple number of teams.
PACE	Rate of speed maintained over a prolonged distance.
PACK	Any group running in close proximity.
PERSONAL RECORD	Best performance time, height or distance in an event for that athlete, usually mentioned as a "PR".
PICK UPS	During warm-up; short distance sprints to assist proper preparation for the race. Also known as ins and outs.
RACING FLAT	A lightweight shoe designed primarily for racing; not meant for training.
SURGE	A gradual increase in speed as a tactical move.
TRAINERS	Shoes constructed for daily practice and intense use - these often have thicker soles than flats.
WARM DOWNS	Exercises through which the body is physically returned to the pre-running state.
WARM UP	Exercises through which the body is physically prepared prior to running.
SPIKES	Running shoes with metal spikes.
EXCHANGE ZONES	Area where the baton will be passed.
SPLITS	Time it takes for an individual to run a certain length on a relay team.
SCRATCH	Athlete is removed from the event.

SOME THOUGHTS TO CONSIDER:

* Watch and pay attention to other parents - become aware of the dynamics that either distract or help the athlete.

DON'T:

*Don't relive your childhood through your son or daughter's activities

*Don't push the child - support them - if expectations are out of reach, the child could have doubts

*Don't expect success in terms of winning all the time - they are doing the best they can at the time

*Don't blame others - coaches or teammates - for poor performances this can start excuses for all kinds of situations

*Don't tie your ego or self-worth to your child's performances

DO:

*Create opportunities for your child to participate in activities for which they are best suited for - be sensitive to their wants and desires

*Support the team concept - be a good team member - you do not have to be the Hero

*Give respect to the coach and his decisions

*Help the child learn from mistakes and experiences - mistakes can happen - what we learn from them is critical

*Make the child accountable for what they do or do not do
(Equipment & Locker rooms - examples)

SETTING SIGHTS AND REACHING HEIGHTS

The setting and assessment of goals is very much an individual decision in Track and Field. Some particular goals may include:

- PR - personal record on a timed course
- Race Pace - maintaining a particular speed throughout a event
- Place - place of finish relative to the entire field
- Team Position - place of finish relative to one's teammates
- Beating a specific opposing athlete

HIS

Completing an event successfully and/or improving upon any of the goals mentioned above can be considered a "hi" for a runner.

LOW'S

Expect the possibility of disappointment after an event by the athlete. Although one goal set by the individual may have been achieved, the athlete may fall short of others and (may) not be satisfied with his total result. Athletes may need emotional space after the event by both coach and parent.

BE A TRACK PACK BACKER

An organized parent group can be an asset to any track program. In addition to being spectators, active involvement with the team can increase a feeling of unity and support among parents.

The goals guidance can come from the coaches.

- * INTERESTED IN HELPERS AT MEETS?
- * FIELD EVENTS OR PRESS BOX WORKERS WORKERS?

WHAT'S IN STYLE

SHOES

If possible, go to a store that deals primarily with athletic equipment or to a specific salesperson who is experienced in athletes. A knowledgeable salesperson can help you to make a proper decision based on size, shoe width, running style and type of events. For a beginning athlete, there are shoes that can serve both for training and racing. Be sure that the salesperson understands that the shoe will be used for daily training. Spikes are needed only for varsity athletes and some JR high sprinters; hurdlers.

CLOTHING

It is not necessary to purchase specific running clothing. Uniforms will be provided for meets. Loose fitting shirts and shorts are adequate for daily practices. Clean, dry socks for each practice will help to prevent blisters, athlete's foot, and other foot problems. Students should have sweat tops and bottoms as well as hats and gloves for use on cold days. (One set off school.) As an athlete becomes more experienced and involved, he or she may wish to purchase additional equipment and clothing.

- * T-shirts

MAKING ENDS MEET

Although the school provides basic needs for their athletes, there are many reasons why fund raising can add a great deal in terms of program development.

Listed below are ways additional funds can be used:

1. Provide the team with equipment which isn't mandatory, but can enhance the total program (running apparel, time clock, finish banners, ect.)
2. Opportunities to travel further distances to participated in invitationals (i.e., out-of-distance, state, foreign trips, etc.)
3. Provide financial assistance to runners to attend running camps.
4. Assist students with financial needs (i.e., running shoes).
5. End of the season banquet or party where individual runners or squads can be recognized by the parents and coaches.

Methods of fund raising may include:

1. Raffles - often parents have access to merchandise which can be donated for a raffle.
2. Refreshment stands - can be run at home invitationals as well as district or regional competitions.
3. Dinners - community or school
4. Car washes
5. Selling of promotional items - bumper stickers, shirts, hats, buttons, etc.

MEET SCORING - NUMBER OF TEAMS

RESULTS

Meet results take time to compile. Usually announcements indicate places and team scores. Athlete will get a copy of results as soon as the coaches receive them.

AWARDS

Generally, at dual meets or smaller meets, there are no awards given. At invitationals meets awards usually are given for individual performance. These awards are an added 'plus' to a Trackster. Individual awards may be given after each event is completed, or at the end of the meet.

